New Nouveau Brunswick CANADA

News Release

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N. B. Human Rights Commission

Human Rights Award presented (02/12/11)

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FREDERICTON (CNB) -- The New Brunswick Human Rights Award was presented to the Multicultural Association of Fredericton on International Human Rights Day, Tuesday, Dec. 10, by Lt.-Gov. Marilyn Trenholme Counsell.

The lieutenant-governor and a few other speakers addressed about 65 people who attended the award ceremony at Old Government House in Fredericton, which was festively decorated with garlands of fir and large beautifully decorated Christmas trees.

From left: Training and Employment Development Minister Norman McFarlane; Lt.-Gov. Marilyn Trenholme Counsell; Ashraf Ghanem, President of MCAF; and Dr. Patrick Malcolmson, Chair of the Human Rights Commission. (Large photo.)

"International Human Rights Day is a day for us to remember that human rights are indivisible, that the right to preserve one's culture belongs to all human beings," said Dr. Patrick Malcolmson, chair of the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission. "We can be proud that here in New Brunswick we have strong multicultural associations in Fredericton and other cities working hard to promote tolerance, diversity, and equal respect for each and everyone of us."

"The association has done a tremendous job of building community, fostering inter-cultural understanding and promoting the value of diversity," Training and Employment Development Minister Norman McFarlane said. "These are activities that benefit all of us."

David Peters, a member of the Human Rights Commission, said the Human Rights Award is given annually by the commission to an individual or group that has shown outstanding effort, achievement and leadership on a volunteer basis in the promotion of human rights and equality. He explained why the Multicultural Association of Fredericton Inc. (MCAF) had been selected.

The MCAF was formed in 1974 to facilitate communication and understanding between persons of

various cultural backgrounds. It provides services and information to newcomers, to settled immigrants and to the community at large.

The MCAF serves as a referral service, and it provides contacts for those seeking to consult the multicultural communities. It also offers a number of services to newcomers, including second language classes, settlement services, a volunteer program, employment facilitation, placement opportunities for students, a homework club for children, as well as computer training. It also operates a multicultural day camp for young children.

Members of the association delivered greetings in several languages, after which Dr. Rosemary Clews addressed the audience. She had nominated the MCAF. The lieutenant-governor then presented the award to Ashraf Ghanem, the President of the Association.

"This is a very special award for us," said Ghanem in his acceptance speech. "The association's goal is to help individuals access opportunities and overcome barriers in this society in order to create a stronger, more harmonious community. In that sense, human rights are the association's whole reason for being. Our goal is that every person reaches their fullest potential as a respected, giving member of the community."

The event concluded with a Senegalese dance performed by four local girls, Alethea and Kara Dinkins and Hani and Ikran Hussein. It had begun with performances by local Spanish guitar player and singer George Melendez, who had sung a traditional Argentine folk song and one of his original compositions. The animator of the ceremony was Alanna Palmer, a member of the Human Rights Commission.

The Human Rights Award was established by the Human Rights Commission in 1988 to mark the 40th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is represented by an elegant wood sculpture on permanent display in the Legislative Assembly building. Last year's recipient was Alida Léveillé Brown of Campbellton, N.B.

For information about the MCAF and the Human Rights Award, see http://www.gnb.ca/hrc-cdp/e/award02.htm.

For the Human Rights Day statement of Dr. Patrick Malcolmson, Chair of the N.B. Human Rights Commission, see: http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/hrc/2002e1227hr.htm.

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MEDIA CONTACTS: Dr. Patrick Malcolmson, Chair, New Brunswick Human Rights Commission, 506-453-2301; Francis Young, Human Rights Officer, New Brunswick Human Rights Commission, 506-453-2308; Lisa Pardy, Office Co-ordinator, Multicultural Association of Fredericton Inc., 506-454-8292.

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